

Report on Visit to

CAMEROON 20 - 23 February 1983

I. General Background

Cameroon is an independent Republic within the area of influence of the Central African Franc, which is backed by the Government of France. Although the population is only around 8,000,000 the country is large, stretching from the Atlantic to the edges of the Sahara. It is one of the meeting points of the largely Moslem Arabic world and the Christian African sphere.

The country's policy is one of "laissez faire" which has resulted in their building up a substantial reserve in the national budget, so that shortage of money is not a problem - rather shortage of expertise and ideas on priorities.

It is being said that Cameroon, contrary to the agreement entered into by all members of the common franc area, is not depositing all its foreign exchange in Paris, but is placing it elsewhere, because of fears of further devaluation of the French franc.

II. Tobacco Industry in the Country

The local industry is dominated by the "BASTOS" Corporation. Originally French-inspired, and operating in Algiers and Cameroon, it now appears to be locally owned and controlled, at least on the surface. Producing very attractive cigarettes, in a number of grades (Bastos Blue at 33 US Cents, Red Club at 60 Cents and Golden Club - a mild tobacco - at 70 Cents) it controls the market.

Cameroon has a number of plantations growing tobacco, including some run by Parastatal bodies.

2025013779

III. Advertising

No T.V. exists in Cameroon as the former President decided there were greater priorities. The local radio station carries commercials as well as the cinemas. Cigarettes are advertised in both media, and the whole country is dominated by "Bastos" signs advertising "Toujours Jeune". There are no warning signs on packets. I was told that cigarettes are advertised in the local press, but did not see any such adverts, though I found some in magazines produced in Cameroon.

IV. Points of Contact

The information above summarises the outcome of my discussions with:

1. the Senior Co-ordinator of the United Nations Development Programme;
2. the Ambassador of Greece, H.E. Mr. Dimitrios Petronakos;
3. the Commerical Attaché of the British Embassy, Mr. John Northover;
4. the Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. M. Dupoizat,

plus a number of the other officials in the respective organisations.

It all appears very satisfactory: however, my talks with Dr. George Quinka, the Senior Co-ordinator of the World Health Organisation, revealed a somewhat different situation.

While confirming all the indications of an open economy, with profit being the ruling motive, and agreeing that the Tobacco Industry, led by Bastos and the strong

2025013780

growers group, would certainly raise strenuous objections to any form of control, he stressed that the Government had made promises to W.H.O. that legislation was in the pipeline, on the lines of the W.H.O. Resolutions, and that, eventually, it is likely that the Government would have to take action to conform to the W.H.O. position under the strong pressure from the Regional Director of W.H.O. in Brazzaville (see the note on Benin).

* * * * *

2025013781